

Homework assigned by elementary teachers

Homework is an important tool that teachers use to help students review and practice what they have learned, to teach children to work independently, and to encourage children to develop good habits and attitudes, such as self-discipline and responsibility. Some argue that the most effective homework assignments are those that are meaningful, those that the student completes successfully, and those that the teachers read, comment on, and return to the student.

- In 1994–95, 49 percent of public school elementary teachers reported that their students spent more than one hour on homework during an average week, compared to 58 percent of private school elementary teachers. Only 6 percent of public and 2 percent of private school elementary teachers reported that their students spent no time on homework during an average week.
- Forty-eight percent of public school elementary teachers reported that they often used written homework to record only whether students had completed their assignment.
- In 1994–95, 4 out of 10 public elementary school teachers often used written homework assignments as a basis for determining student grades. Private elementary teachers were more likely to collect, correct, and return written homework assignments to students and to use homework assignments for grading students than were public elementary teachers.
- In 1994–95, public and private elementary teachers were more likely to give their students homework assignments that involved reading textbooks and completing routine exercises at least once a week than they were to assign students written or oral reports and problems for which there was no obvious method of solution (see supplemental table 36-1).

Average amount of time elementary¹ teachers reported that their students spent on homework during an average week and teachers' use of homework, by control of school and years of teaching experience: School year 1994–95

	Public			Private		
	Total	Years of teaching experience		Total	Years of teaching experience	
		Less than 4 years	4 years or more		Less than 4 years	4 years or more
Time spent on homework and teachers' use of homework						
Average time spent on homework during an average week						
None	5.5	1.7	6.1	1.9	4.4	1.4
One hour or less	45.5	42.9	45.9	39.7	32.2	41.2
Between one and two hours	26.0	37.1	24.5	29.8	31.0	29.6
More than two hours	23.0	18.3	23.6	28.5	32.4	27.8
Percentage of teachers who often ² used written homework in the following ways:						
Record only whether assignments were completed	47.7	48.9	47.5	54.4	53.4	54.6
Collect, correct, and keep assignments	41.2	46.7	40.5	52.6	39.5	55.1
Keep items in a student portfolio	35.1	44.3	33.8	37.0	26.6	39.1
Collect, correct, and return assignments to students	72.3	78.3	71.5	81.8	81.4	81.8
Use assignments as a basis for grading students	41.4	41.9	41.3	51.3	40.2	53.5

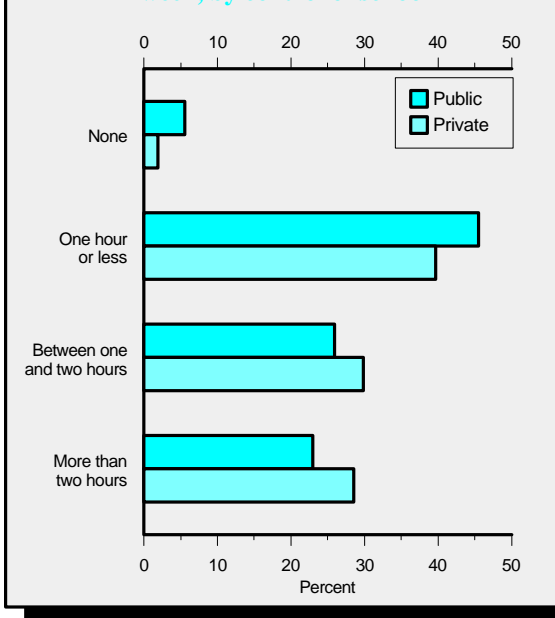
¹ Includes elementary teachers whose main assignment was teaching "general elementary" and who taught in both the 1993–94 and 1994–95 school years; therefore, new teachers were not included in this analysis. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

² Includes those teachers who responded "always" and "often."

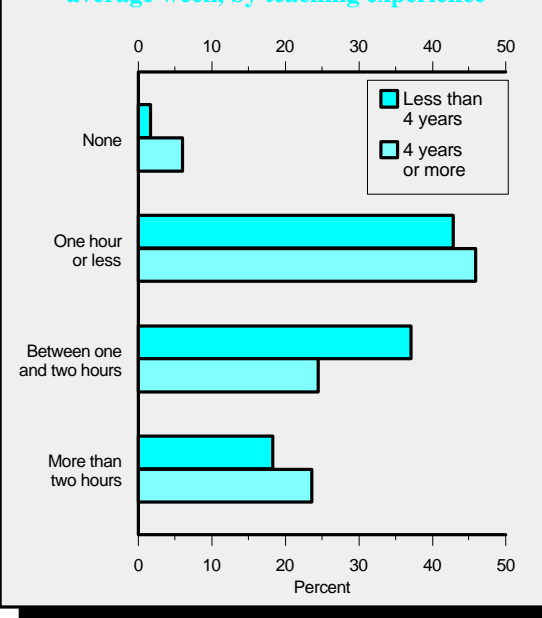
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994–95.

Homework assigned by elementary¹ teachers: School year 1994–95

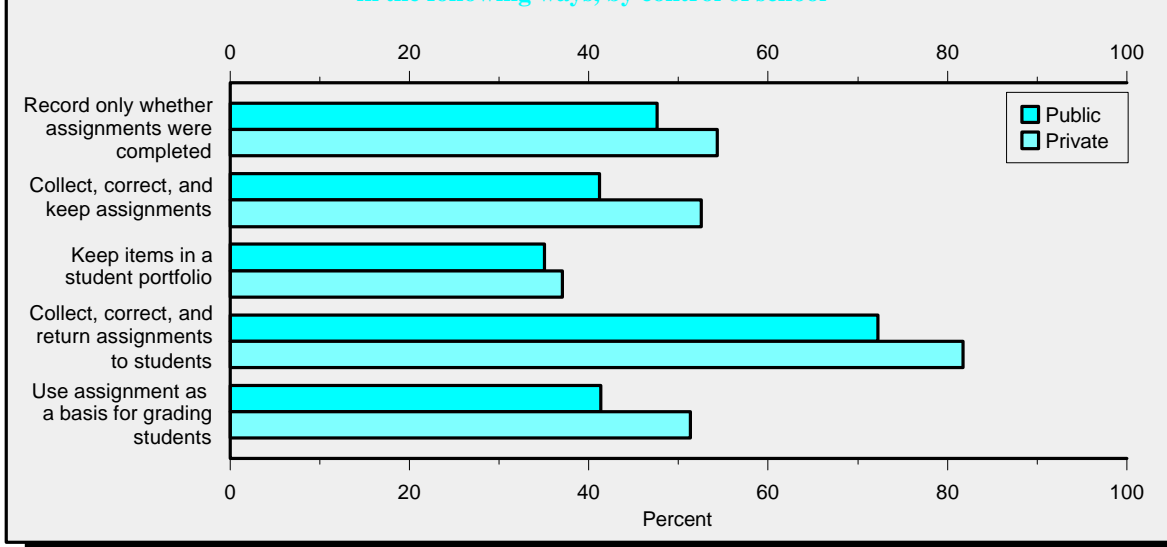
Amount of time students in elementary teachers' classes spent on homework during an average week, by control of school



Amount of time students in public elementary teachers' classes spent on homework during an average week, by teaching experience



Percentage of elementary teachers who often² used written homework in the following ways, by control of school



¹ Includes elementary teachers whose main assignment was teaching "general elementary" and who taught in both the 1993–94 and 1994–95 school years; therefore, new teachers were not included in this analysis. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

² Includes those teachers who responded "always" and "often."

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994–95.

Note to Indicator 36: The Teacher Follow-up Survey

The Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) provides information on movement within and outside of the teaching profession in public and private schools. TFS is a subsample of teachers in the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and is conducted one year after each SASS cycle. The third TFS was conducted in the 1994–95 school year; two previous cycles of TFS were conducted in school years 1988–89 and 1991–92. The survey identifies and collects data from the following groups of teachers who participated in the SASS interview the previous year: 1) those who remained in the teaching profession, including those who remained in the same school and those who moved; and 2) those who left the teaching profession.

The 1994–95 TFS included questions on teaching methods, such as the use of homework and student portfolios. Respondents to the questions on teaching methods were those teachers who taught in both the 1993–94 and 1994–95 school years; therefore, the teachers' responses about their teaching methods represented a measurement of their actions in the 1994–95 school year, but do not consist of a complete random sample of the 1994–95 teacher work force. New teachers in the 1994–95 school year were left out of the survey.

Elementary teachers

The TFS questions asked teachers to identify their main teaching assignment. For *Indicators 36, 37, and 38*, the elementary teacher category consists of those teachers who responded that their main teaching assignment was “general elementary.” The elementary teacher category excluded those elementary teachers who taught special subject areas, such as art, foreign language, science, or special education. However, special area elementary teachers were included in the “total” column of *Indicators 37 and 38*.

Grouping of responses

In most cases, questions were asked in terms of “how many times in the past semester did you...?” In these cases, the response choices included: “almost every day,” “once or twice a week,” “once or twice a month,” “once or twice a semester,” or “never.” For the indicators in the *Condition*, the responses “almost every day” and “once or twice a week” were combined to create the “at least once a week” response category. For the indicator on the assignment of homework by elementary teachers, two questions that asked “how often did you...?” were used to create the response category. The responses to the questions included “always,” “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never.” “Always” and “often” were combined to create the “often” response category used in this analysis.

Average amount of time elementary¹ teachers reported that their students spent on homework during an average week and teachers' use of homework, by control of school and years of teaching experience: School year 1994-95

	Public			Private		
	Total	Years of teaching experience		Total	Years of teaching experience	
		Less than 4 years	4 years or more		Less than 4 years	4 years or more
Time spent on homework and teachers' use of homework	Total			Total		
Average time spent on homework during an average week						
None	5.5	1.7	6.1	1.9	4.4	1.4
One hour or less	45.5	42.9	45.9	39.7	32.2	41.2
Between one and two hours	26.0	37.1	24.5	29.8	31.0	29.6
More than two hours	23.0	18.3	23.6	28.5	32.4	27.8
Percentage of teachers who often ^c used written homework in the following ways:						
Record only whether assignments were completed	47.7	48.9	47.5	54.4	53.4	54.6
Collect, correct, and keep assignments	41.2	46.7	40.5	52.6	39.5	55.1
Keep items in a student portfolio	35.1	44.3	33.8	37.0	26.6	39.1
Collect, correct, and return assignments to students	72.3	78.3	71.5	81.8	81.4	81.8
Use assignments as a basis for grading students	41.4	41.9	41.3	51.3	40.2	53.5

¹ Includes elementary teachers whose main assignment was teaching "general elementary" and who taught in both the 1993-94 and 1994-95 school years; therefore, new teachers were not included in this analysis. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

⁴ Includes those teachers who responded "always" and "often."

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994-95.

**Table 36-1 Percentage of elementary¹ teachers who reported assigning types of homework and teachers' use of homework, by control of school and years of teaching experience:
School year 1994-95**

Type of homework and teachers' use of homework	Public			Private		
	Total	Years of teaching experience		Total	Years of teaching experience	
		Less than 4 years	4 years or more		Less than 4 years	4 years or more
Percentage of teachers who reported assigning types of homework at least once a week ²						
Write a journal entry	43.4	50.9	42.4	37.1	34.3	37.6
Prepare a written report	16.5	17.9	16.3	14.8	10.2	15.7
Work on problems for which there is no obvious method of solution	15.5	23.3	14.5	10.0	10.2	9.9
Read the textbook or other assigned reading	73.6	69.1	74.2	78.0	81.9	77.2
Apply concepts or principles to different or unfamiliar situations	41.0	52.9	39.4	45.3	32.3	47.8
Read supplementary material	65.7	65.0	65.7	62.3	51.5	64.4
Complete routine exercises or problems from worksheets, workbooks, or text	79.2	79.9	79.1	88.4	89.0	88.3
Work on a project, gather data, or conduct an experiment	29.3	25.8	29.8	27.7	21.6	28.9
Prepare an oral report	12.9	11.2	13.2	8.8	9.6	8.6
Complete a short writing assignment	61.9	62.8	61.7	58.2	57.4	58.4
Percentage of teachers who often ³ used written homework in the following ways:						
Record only whether assignments were completed	47.7	48.9	47.5	54.4	53.4	54.6
Collect, correct, and keep assignments	41.2	46.7	40.5	52.6	39.5	55.1
Keep items in a student portfolio	35.1	44.3	33.8	37.0	26.6	39.1
Collect, correct, and return assignments to students	72.3	78.3	71.5	81.8	81.4	81.8
Have students exchange assignments and correct them in class	27.0	28.0	26.9	35.4	26.3	37.2
Have students correct their own assignments in class	38.2	35.0	38.6	46.9	33.7	49.4
Use assignments as a basis for class discussion	55.0	50.8	55.6	55.5	45.8	57.4
Use assignments as a basis for grading students	41.4	41.9	41.3	51.3	40.2	53.5
Use assignments as a basis for lesson planning	50.7	47.8	51.1	47.3	34.2	49.8

¹ Includes elementary teachers whose main assignment was teaching "general elementary" and who taught in both the 1993-94 and 1994-95 school years; therefore, new teachers are not included in this analysis. See the supplemental note to this indicator for further discussion.

² Includes those teachers who responded "almost every day" and "once or twice a week."

³ Includes those teachers who responded "always" and "often."

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994-95.

Table S36 Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 36*

	Public			Private		
	Total	Years of teaching experience		Total	Years of teaching experience	
		Less than 4 years	4 years or more		Less than 4 years	4 years or more
Time spent on homework and teachers' use of homework						
Average time spent on homework during an average week						
None	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6	1.6	0.6
One hour or less	2.3	3.6	2.6	2.7	4.7	3.3
Between one and two hours	1.9	3.9	2.2	2.2	4.2	2.6
More than two hours	2.0	2.6	2.3	2.0	4.0	2.5
Percentage of teachers who often used written homework in the following ways:						
Record only whether assignments were completed	2.7	3.6	3.1	2.5	4.0	2.8
Collect, correct, and keep assignments	2.0	3.7	2.3	2.6	3.7	3.0
Keep items in a student portfolio	2.1	3.5	2.4	3.0	3.0	3.4
Collect, correct, and return assignments to students	2.2	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.6	2.5
Use assignments as a basis for grading students	2.2	3.8	2.4	2.7	4.3	3.1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994-95.

Table S36-1 Standard errors for table 36-1

Type of homework assignment and teachers' use of homework	Public			Private		
	Total	Years of teaching experience		Total	Years of teaching experience	
		Less than 4 years	4 years or more		Less than 4 years	4 years or more
Percentage of teachers who reported assigning types of homework at least once a week						
Write a journal entry	2.2	3.1	2.5	2.4	3.8	3.0
Prepare a written report	2.0	2.5	2.4	1.7	2.3	2.0
Work on problems for which there is no obvious method of solution	1.4	3.3	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.8
Read the textbook or other assigned reading	2.0	3.6	2.2	2.3	4.0	2.8
Apply concepts or principles to different or unfamiliar situations	1.6	3.4	1.7	2.6	3.5	2.9
Read supplementary material	1.9	3.4	2.1	2.2	3.7	2.6
Complete routine exercises or problems from worksheets, workbooks, or text	1.9	2.6	2.1	1.7	2.8	2.0
Work on a project, gather data, or conduct an experiment	2.0	3.5	2.2	2.1	3.3	2.5
Prepare an oral report	1.3	2.0	1.5	1.7	2.5	1.9
Complete a short writing assignment	2.0	3.3	2.3	2.5	4.2	3.0
Percentage of teachers who often used written homework in the following ways:						
Record only whether assignments were completed	2.7	3.6	3.1	2.5	4.0	2.8
Collect, correct, and keep assignments	2.0	3.7	2.3	2.6	3.7	3.0
Keep items in a student portfolio	2.1	3.5	2.4	3.0	3.0	3.4
Collect, correct, and return assignments to students	2.2	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.6	2.5
Have students exchange assignments and correct them in class	2.1	3.5	2.4	2.3	3.7	2.6
Have students correct their own assignments in class	2.4	3.2	2.7	3.2	3.7	3.6
Use assignments as a basis for class discussion	2.5	3.5	2.7	2.6	3.9	3.0
Use assignments as a basis for grading students	2.2	3.8	2.4	2.7	4.3	3.1
Use assignments as a basis for lesson planning	2.2	4.2	2.5	2.8	4.2	3.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Follow-up Survey, 1994–95.